

FATHERHOOD NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO. 11 | JANUARY | 2023



The beginning of the new year is always synonymous with a fresh start. It gives us time to “wipe the slate clean” and forgive ourselves for not being the perfect dads we want to be, and for any mistakes we have made along the way.

What resolutions would you want to make for the new year? We hope for more time reading with our kids, playing, game nights, and taking time to teach our children the life skills we want to ensure they learn. Let's make 2023 a great year, and work toward many new happy memories with our children!

Please connect with us!

Contact our Fatherhood Initiative
Project lead James Craig

Jamescc@health.ok.gov (405) 426-8089



“Dad Brain” Researched

“Mom brain” is often used to describe the changes that occur in the brain after pregnancy for new moms. It turns out, there are changes in fathers' brains as well, seeing evidence of “**dad brain.**”

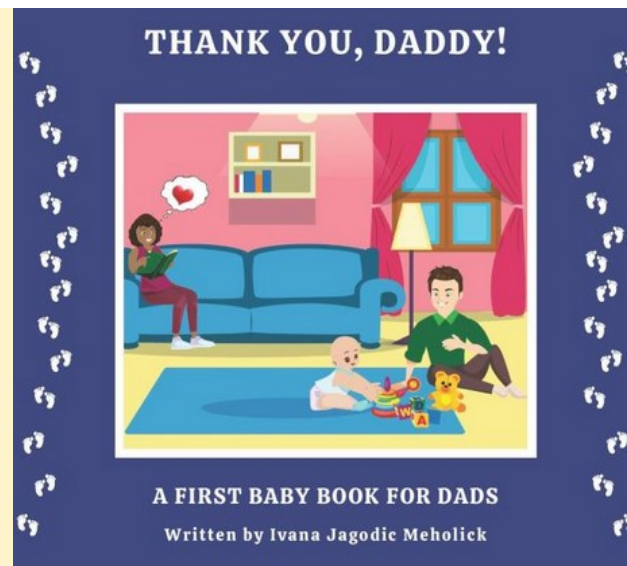
Researchers scanned the brains of 40 expectant fathers in the US and 20 in Spain, as well as 17 without children for the control group. These scans occurred before the fathers learned their partners were pregnant, again two months after birth, and finally nine months after birth.

They learned that the areas of the brain responsible for **visual processing and empathy increased, while the overall volume of the brain decreased.** While the sample size is relatively small, the study's lead author, Darby Saxbe, stated that an early hypothesis he holds fits with these changes.

“Becoming a parent entails changes to your lifestyle and your biology... And it requires new skills like being able to empathize with a nonverbal infant, so it makes sense but has not been proven that the brain would be particularly plastic during the transition to parenthood as well.”

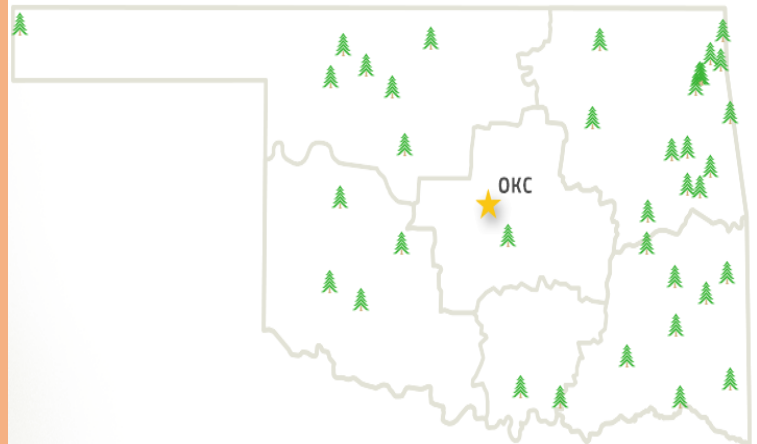
First Baby Book Celebrates Fathers

Ivana Jagodic Meholic wrote the book "Thank you, Daddy!" after her experience going through postpartum depression and anxiety, and feeling great support from her husband. She wanted to write this book appreciating all the wonderful support that new dads provide to their partners - it showcases that **parenthood is a partnership**. It is important to recognize the **father's roles of partner, parent, and support person are central to the lives of mom and baby**. As moms recover from pregnancy and childbirth, dads provide crucial support allowing moms to rest and recover. The book is geared for both parents and kids, with a space in the beginning of the book to put a picture of your new baby's father.



First Day Hike at an Oklahoma State Park

Most of the state parks here in Oklahoma will be offering a free guided hike on January 1. The level of hike depends on the park, some being leisurely (a mile or less), while others are more strenuous at over five miles. In a majority of the parks, **complimentary coffee, hot chocolate and tea will be provided**. These events are being held in conjunction with the America's State Parks First Day Hikes initiative that will take place in all 50 states. Start the year off with a trek through a state park, a great way to spend screen-free fun with your family.



New Dad Tool for Your Toolbox for the New Year: Staying Active as a New Father



Sion owns a gym, a supplement company, and a clothing line. Putting all his energy into his new son and his businesses, he had found himself and his spouse eating fast food meals and take out five days out of the week. Combined with his lack of sleep from his son waking up throughout the night, his typical exercise regimen went "out the window."

With his businesses focused on fitness, he felt ashamed of his weight gain and devised a plan to get back into shape. Sion decided to go back to dedicating time to walking with his son in his stroller every evening, and came up with these tips for dads to integrate exercise back into your schedule.

It can be hard to juggle your physical activity and eating healthy when you are juggling a newborn and their unpredictable sleep schedule. Sion Monty found himself gaining almost 60 lbs. in the first six months after his son was born.

1. Make it part of your routine to walk with your child every day.

2. Carry your child up and down stairs, either at your home, or safe public place.

3. With older children play sports with them like football, soccer, or toss a Frisbee.

4. Play the "airplane" game with them pushing them up as you would with a "reverse push-up."²

How Does “Manhood” Affect Men’s Health?3

Since 2017, Dr. Kevin Roy has led a class titled, “Man Up: Health, Masculinities, Families and Inequality” that was created as a space to spark conversations among his students about the intersection of what it means to be a “man” with topics like suicide, opioid abuse, mass shootings, and others.

Dr. Roy has been praised by the academic community and peers for his class, opening the students to the conversations of **how men have been socialized, and how this socialization has led to violent outcomes**. That the “manly” way to be is to repress emotion, and that without healthy outlets for that emotion it can come out in anger and violence. These can sometimes be seen as acceptable ways to act since anger is coded as “masculine,” but if a man shows sadness, fear, or begins to cry these are seen as “feminine” traits that others may take advantage of.

Dr. Roy bases the curriculum with research focusing on young men as they transition into adulthood and fatherhood. **How can you start these conversations with your father or boys?**

You can read more about Dr. Roy’s work here at the University of Maryland’s website here:

<https://sph.umd.edu/people/kevin-roy>



Dr. Kevin Roy, professor of Family Science University of Maryland College Park School of Public Health

Need Resources?

Throughout the state you can call 211 or go to 211oklahoma.org for help with housing, food, utilities, mental health, transportation, COVID-19 information, and other needs.



REFERENCES

- 1 Magdalena Martínez-García, M., Paternina-Die, Sofia, M., Oscar Vilarroya, C., Desco, M., Carmona, S., Darby, S. (2022) First-time fathers show longitudinal gray matter cortical volume reductions: evidence from two international samples. *Cerebral Cortex*.
- 2 Natalie Keeler (Retrieved December 5, 2022) *Dad Loses Four Stone Exercising With Newborn Baby* <https://www.baby-magazine.co.uk/dad-loses-four-stone-exercising-with-newborn-baby>
- 3 Allison Eatough (Retrieved December 12 2022) *Masculinity “Detox”* <https://today.umd.edu/masculinity-detox>